DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 091 286 SO 007 452

AUTHOR	Hawke, Sharryl
TITLE	Crazy Shapes and Cool Impressions: A Corporation. Profiles of Promise 29.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education, Boulder, Colo.; Social Science Education Consortium, Inc., Boulder, Colo.
SPONS AGENCY	National Inst. of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	[74]
NOTE	4p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS	*Business Education; Ceramics; Communication Skills; Community Involvement; *Design Crafts; *Educational Innovation; Elementary Education; Individualized Instruction; Intermediate Grades; *Motivation Techniques; Nonformal Education; Printing; Relevance (Education); *Social Studies; Student Centered Curriculum; Team Teaching
IDENTIFIERS	Anchorage Alaska; *Profiles of Promise

ABSTRACT

A corporation, complete with stockholders, which designs, manufactures and merchandizes products is a business like many others, except that its members are eight to twelve year olds in Anchorage, Alaska. An open-structured elementary school, grouped into six teams of children from four grade levels, operates with teams of teachers employing individualized programs. A new approach to learning, necessitated by a group of students unsuccessful in traditional programs, was developed to emphasize practical learning and relevance to daily life by centering on a classroom business. Students prepare the materials, produce clay items and hand-painted note cards, and sell them for profit. The business is the basis for teaching fundamental academic skills: math skills are learned as needed for business operations; language skills are taught constantly through report writing, advertising, and the like; oral skills are improved through contact with community resource people; research techniques are developed as students seek information on purchasing supplies or marketing their products. Results show continued group enthusiasm, improvement of student skills, and considerable personal growth in the children's communication skills. (Author/KSM)

ED 091286

profiles of promise 29
ERIC/CHESS
SSEC

ISSUE
NO.29

by
SHARRYL HAWKE
Writer
ERIC/ChESS

PROFILES OF PROMISE are descriptive brochures that highlight innovative social studies and social education practices, which teachers and administrators can easily adapt to their own classrooms or schools.

Prepared jointly by the ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education and the Social Science Education Consortium, Inc., Boulder, Colorado. Distributed by the Social Science Education Consortium.

REPRODUCTION IN WHOLE OR PART IS STRICTLY ENCOURAGED.

This publication was prepared pursuant to a contract with the National Institute of Education. Contractors undertaking such projects under Government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their judgment in professional and technical matters. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official National Institute of Education position or policy.

SO 007 852

CRAZY SHAPES AND COOL IMPRESSIONS: A Corporation

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Crazy Shapes and Cool Impressions is a corporation, complete with stockholders, officers, and factory workers. It designs, manufactures, and merchandizes products. The corporation turns a profit and plans for expansion. Crazy Shapes and Cool Impressions is a business like many others, except that the members of this corporation are eight to twelve-year-old youngsters whose base of operation is an elementary school in Anchorage, Alaska.

The home of Crazy Shapes and Cool Impressions, Wonder Park Elementary School, is an open-structured school with students grouped into six teams. Each team is composed of children from four grade levels and operates within a certain area of the building under the direction of a team of teachers, who share classroom responsibilities and work with all children on the team. Students participate in programs individualized to suit their particular needs and interests.

In 1970 two teachers, Erin Wyatt and Jo King, felt they needed a new approach to learning for the students on the Purple team. While the students were a mixed group in terms of motivation, many of the children had been assigned to the Purple team because they were unsuccessful in traditional programs, i.e., they were behavior problems. The teachers believed the students would respond to a program more relevant to daily life--a curriculum which emphasized practical learning.

The program which Wyatt and King developed centers on a classroom business. Students prepare materials, produce a product, and sell that product for a profit. Originally the business was primarily to replace the traditional arts and crafts projects of the team, but it has grown considerably beyond that concept. At present Crazy Shapes and Cool Impressions is not only a profit-making corporation but also the basis of an extensive curriculum used to teach fundamental academic skills.

CRAZY SHAPES AND COOL IMPRESSIONS

The key to success in any business is marketable merchandise, and Crazy Shapes and Cool Impressions has developed two popular products. One type of product is clay items--chimes, jewelry, small bowls and pots--made from clay found in Cook Inlet near Anchorage. Hand-painted note cards, many featuring Alaskan plant designs, are the second type of merchandise. The corporate name was inspired by the two products.

Clay and print items were chosen for several reasons. From a learning standpoint, both products required relatively simple step-by-step processes in which all students could participate and achieve success. The processes also allowed students to see a product progress from basic materials to finished product. From a marketing standpoint, the items were unusual but socially, economically, and geographically related to Alaska--a strong merchandising point.

To sell their product, team members built a ten-foot square cedar booth which can be transported to various marketing outlets. The booth is used several times a year at the Anchorage Flea Market, where students rent space at the rate of twenty dollars for three days. Students have also set up shop at local conventions to demonstrate their wares. When not in use at these outlets, the booth is kept fully stocked for customers who come to the school. Students publicize their merchandise through flyers, newspaper, and radio ads, all of which they write themselves.

Crazy Shapes and Cool Impressions has an organizational structure like most corporations. The Board of Directors is composed of the teachers who make broad policies and aid in problem solving. The remainder of the corporate posts are filled by students. There are the officers--the President, Secretary and Treasurer--who fulfill normal executive responsibilities. Management level personnel include managers of business, sales, advertising, production, and equipment, and foremen who supervise the day-to-day production in the factory. Students who do not hold executive or management positions are factory workers. However, all students, including officers, are required to work in the factory at least three hours per week.

Corporation officers are elected at a team meeting, but students apply for positions before the election. To apply, a student completes an application form which requires him to describe his past work experience, the skills

and characteristics which qualify him for the job, and the ways in which he would make the position more efficient. All corporation members receive pay checks, but the checks are void. Factory workers earn an hourly wage while officers are paid monthly salaries.

Funding for Crazy Shapes and Cool Impressions comes primarily from corporation profits. The Purple team receives the usual amount of school supplies allotted to all teams at Wonder Park, and they use these in the business. However, additional materials are paid for by business earnings. The initial seed money for the corporation was obtained by selling stock to students at $2.00 per share. The Corporation has netted between $300 and $800 yearly, and the past three years student stockholders have voted to reinvest profits in the business. Earnings have been used to purchase a potter's wheel, a second kiln, and a speaker telephone.

CORPORATION AND CURRICULUM

The end goal of the classroom corporation is not to make a profit but to serve as a vehicle for student learning. Wyatt and King find that learning becomes relatively painless for students when skills are taught in the context of the corporate operation. During the three years that the corporation has been operational, the teachers have developed a curriculum based on the team's business. Traditional academic learning has not been discarded, but it has been repackaged in a more relevant approach.

For example, math skills are basic for elementary students, and the Purple team children still study math. However, rather than following a math textbook from beginning to end, students learn skills as they are needed in operating the business. Students are responsible for all the sales and bookkeeping in the corporation, so math related skills are taught in these contexts. Producing the products requires measurement and computation, another opportunity to learn math skills. Students have access to cash registers and calculators, reducing the amount of time they spend in computing problems but providing practical experience in using business machines.

Language skills are constantly taught. Report writing, advertising, business correspondence, personal evaluations, application forms--all require written language practice. Oral skills are improved through interviewing resource people, speaking to community groups, doing public relations work, and day-to-day communication in the factory setting. The need to employ careful research techniques becomes obvious when students have to seek and compile information on purchasing supplies or marketing their products.

Learning often takes place as students venture out of the school building and into the community to consult with people who can help them improve their business. Students have worked with public relations and advertising people in promoting their product. A photographer helped students learn the techniques of videotaping; demonstrations of factory processes were then videotaped to be used for training purposes. An auditor assisted in setting up a bookkeeping system; a lawyer helped draw up a contract for selling products on consignment; shopkeepers and bankers have been consulted. All these excursions into the business world have broadened student awareness of the community and its citizens.

The curriculum used by the Purple team is highly individualized. Some students progress quickly, others slowly. To allow for individual rates of progress while still operating a successful business, Wyatt and King have developed a general time schedule which seems to accommodate both curriculum and corporation.

September: Each child is assigned his personal program and allowed time to become comfortable with it.

October: Small groups of children who are progressing well are selected to handle (1) preparation, ordering, and stocking of materials; (2) organization of the factory area; and (3) initial training in the math and writing skills necessary for all workers. Interested children are selected to research possibilities for sales and to contact appropriate people.

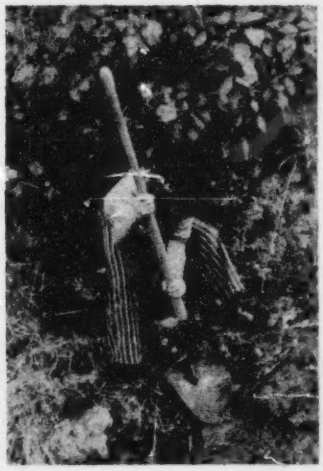
November: Those children already working on facets of the program become tutors to children newly introduced. The tutors begin their training in printmaking and working with clay.

December and January: Small groups of children take turns gaining printmaking skills and working with clay.

February: By the middle of February all students have been exposed to the academic work related to the factory and have had training in both processes. At this point students are given the job requirements of each executive position and asked to evaluate their skills and talents in light of those descriptions. After election of officers, each corporation member is assinged to his working schedule. Factory production continues until the end of the school term.

WORKING IN THE FACTORY

Students are not required to sign up for work in the factory, but Wyatt reports that nearly 100% of the Purple team children do choose factory work. Children who do not wish to work in the factory participate in a stiffer, individualized academic program. Once factory work begins, a one and one-half hour period is scheduled each day when students can work. Though students must work three hours per week, they may work as many more hours as they

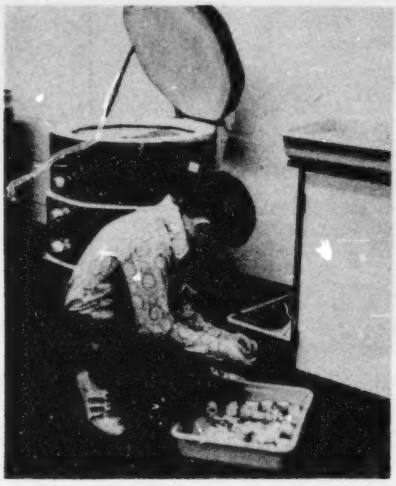


Digging clay at Cook Inlet

Cutting wind chimes

Checking time cards for computation of wages

Sieving clay in the factory



Preparing products for kiln firing

Using calculator to check expenses

choose, provided their other work is not neglected. Some have clocked over 20 hours in a week preceding a sale.

A student's shift at the factory begins by punching a time clock. He then proceeds to his specific task in the assembly-line operation. A child may stick with the same job for the entire year, but teachers encourage students to try a variety of tasks. Job changes must be arranged so that other students' production is not affected.

The procedure for making the clay products involves several tasks. The process begins with students digging clay from the Cook Inlet area. The clay is then softened with water, mixed by hand to make a thick liquid, poured through a sieve, and allowed to dry until workable. When the clay is ready, it is either cut into free forms by the children or fashioned into pots on a potter's wheel. Once formed, the pieces are dried, bisqued fired, glazed, and fired again.

Making the note cards is a less extensive process. The first step is cutting the cards from heavy stock paper. Then water-based inks are mixed on a tile and spread with rollers over Alaskan plants, stencils, or patterns of string and paper which are arranged on the cards. The paper is dried, folded, and packaged with envelopes.

As with any activity, the students have likes and dislikes about the corporation work. Summarizing the students' feelings, Wyatt believes the children like working with the clay and print as well as the added responsibility of the business operation. They like selling their products and dealing with real money. Going into the community is always a treat for the children, and they enjoy having constant contact with adults on a business basis. The students take much pride in the fact that they have become well-known throughout the district for their work and their products.

Dislikes? There are those, too. While students like added responsibilities at times, there are other times when they resent the extra duties. They do not like being punctual or keeping a schedule. Doing the same thing over and over again on the assembly line is disagreeable, as is close contact in the crowded factory situation. And students constantly object to being "bossed" by other children. When asked if there are disagreements among the children over division of labor, Wyatt replied, "Definitely. These problems we expect, as well as many others. Constant problem-solving situations are basic to the program."

EVALUATING THE PROGRAM

Children on the Purple team are evaluated in the same way as other Wonder Park students. No grades are given but teachers do prepare narrative type report cards for parents. The reports emphasize basic skills, attitudes, and the areas in which the child needs improvement.

In evaluating the effectiveness of the corporation-curriculum program, teachers point to a number of signs of achievement. First, there has been continued group enthusiasm for the project through all three years. Nearly all of the children participate each semester, including the children who are on the Purple team for more than one year. In addition, the parents in the Wonder Park community have continued to wholeheartedly support the program.

Student skills have steadily improved. All written work is kept, and an improvement in writing ability is observable in virtually all cases. The children have grown quite knowledgeable about business practices and skills, often surprising community residents with their insight. Because of their community exposure, the students are quite aware of agencies and resources in the area. And of course, the factory work has helped the youngsters become quite skilled in clay work and printmaking.

Teachers also see considerable personal growth in the children as they gain confidence in communicating with adults. Students are better able to work out personality problems among themselves, and their decision-making ability has improved. Wyatt has said, "The children that remain part of the team after one year can make specific decisions concerning choices. This ability carries over into other team activities noticeably."

The teacher role in a business oriented curriculum, such as the one at Wonder Park, is considerably different from that of the traditional teacher. Wyatt and King feel they have eliminated some difficulties by a division of responsibilities which allows each teacher to function primarily in her areas of strength. In this instance, Wyatt handles the actual factory work, most of the out-of-factory activities, and curriculum development in some areas. King, whose strength is language arts, directs general corporation meetings, executive meetings, report writing, and oral presentations. She is also adept at trouble-shooting, personnel problem solving, and interpersonal conflicts, so she handles many of these aspects of the program.

Most frustrating problems? The teachers name three. As in most classroom situations, the teachers feel they could accomplish much more if they could reduce their class load of 42 by one-half. They would like more freedom to take children out of school and into the community, since they feel these experiences are especially important. Finally, the teachers find a personal lack of patience can sometimes cause problems. Like children everywhere, it takes time for the Wonder Park students to become self-reliant and decisive. The learning period can be difficult for one teacher supervising 40 workers in a factory.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Crazy Shapes and Cool Impression is not a static corporation. Each year new equipment and new ideas have been incorporated into the business. This year will be no exception, as plans call for the addition of a new section in the factory area which will produce craft and woodwork items. Rather than an assembly line operation, these products will be begun and completed by the same child.

King and Wyatt feel the new section will be an effective learning vehicle for the children. The items will be more closely tailored to individual preferences and ideas than are the mass-produced products now made. Each child will have the opportunity to be solely responsible for the production of an article. Hopefully these activities will teach the children skills they can use in their own leisure time. Students have seen other small shops which work in this fashion and are looking forward to the new opportunities.

The success of Crazy Shapes and Cool Impressions seems to be contagious. Other teams in Wonder Park are now producing their own products which the Purple team sells on consignment. In the coming year other schools in the district plan to initiate similar businesses. The Wonder Park students have been asked to serve as consultants to these programs.

There are natural limitations of size and money to any business operated within an educational setting. Crazy Shapes and Cool Impressions has demonstrated that even on a modest, manageable scale, a corporation-curriculum plan can provide an enriching educational environment for students to gain both basic academic skills and practical work experience.

CORPORATION-CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES

1. To personalize the educational experiences of each child.
2. To help children relate academic learning to situations outside of school.
3. To give children experience in the dynamics of a business.
4. To increase knowledge of environments other than school.
5. To give children an opportunity to communicate with many adults.
6. To expose children to group dynamics in a working situation.
7. To relate academic skills to real, personal tasks.
8. To familiarize students with an art process.
9. To introduce children to a variety of jobs held by adults.
10. To help students acquire a variety of physical and mental skills.

ERIC DOCUMENTS

ED 079 503 - Elements of American Industry Taught In Elementary Schools. 223 pp. Available from University Microfilms, Inc., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106, MF-$4.00, Zerography-$10.00. This study indicates that both students and teachers lack knowledge about American industry and environmental concepts concerning American industry, and recommends the inclusion of these concepts in the elementary curriculum.

ED 074 285 - Industrial Arts for the Elementary Classroom. Learning Through Handwork. 375 pp. Available from Charles A. Bennett Co., Inc., 809 Detweiler Drive, Peoria, Illinois 61614, $5.36. This textbook describes integrated handiwork activities for the elementary grades. Evaluation procedures and review questions are provided for the activities.

ED 068 887 - World of Work in an Elementary School. 22 pp. MF-$.65, HC-$3.29. An approach to teaching career education to children in grades kindergarten through six is presented, with a description of how to involve the entire school community.

ED 068 734 - Community-Career Orientation Program. Final Report. 242 pp. MF-$.65, HC-$9.87. This is a description of a career education project for elementary students in the New Britain, Connecticut public schools. Children involved in the project evidenced a greater degree of self respect, more positive peer relationships, and a greater knowledge of and pride in their community.

For further information, write:

Ms. Erin Wyatt
926 E. 10th Ave.
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

HOW TO ORDER ERIC DOCUMENTS

The complete document may be ordered from:

ERIC Document Reproduction Service
P.O. Drawer O
Bethesda, Maryland 20014

Order by ED number and specify whether you want hardcopy, HC (A photoreproduction of the original), or microfiche, MF (A card of microfiche). To read MF, you need a microfiche reader, available at most libraries. Payment must accompany orders under $10.00, and a 50¢ handling charge must be added to all orders.

If you know of other significant practices write a one page description, including the name and address of a person to contact for further information, and send to:

PROFILES OF PROMISE
855 Broadway
Boulder, Colorado 80302

profiles of promise
855 Broadway,
Boulder, Colorado 80302